

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 05943 311758Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 5943

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT,PO, AO

SUBJECT: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: TWO KEY MILITARY APPOINTMENTS

REFS: (A) LISBON 5504 (DTG 121710Z AUG 76), (B) LISBON 5911
(DTG 301422Z AUG 76)

SUMMARY: LTC HUGO DOS SANTOS WAS INSTALLED AUGUST 31
AS COMMANDER OF THE CENTRAL MILITARY REGION. GEN
MELO EGIDIO WAS NAMED ARMY VICE CHIEF AUGUST 30.
THE DESIGNATIONS OF DOS SANTOS AND EGIDIO FURTHER
REINFORCE PRESIDENT EANES'S CONTROL OVER THE COMMAND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LISBON 05943 311758Z

STRUCTURE. END SUMMARY.

1. MILITARY APPOINTMENTS: TWO IMPORTANT MILITARY POSITIONS WERE FILLED:

-- SANTOS TO COIMBRA: LTC HUGO DOS SANTOS WAS SWORN IN AS COMMANDER OF THE CENTRAL MILITARY REGION AUGUST 31 AND RECEIVED A BREVET PROMOTION TO BRIGADIER. SANTOS REPLACES LTC FRANCO CHARAIS WHO OPTED TO REMAIN ON THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (REF A). SANTOS HAD SERVED UNTIL RECENTLY AS MILITARY ATTACHE AT THE PORTUGUESE EMBASSY IN ROMANIA. HE WAS AN ORIGINAL MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND HAS MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH PRESIDENT EANES AND ARMY "OPERATIONALS" THROUGHOUT THE PAST TWO YEARS. SANTOS TOLD ARMA AUGUST 30 THAT HE HAS ALREADY MADE SEVERAL CHANGES IN SUBORDINATE COMMANDS OF THE CENTRAL REGION.

-- EGIDIO AS ARMY VICE CHIEF: GEN MELO EGIDIO WAS INSTALLED AUGUST 30 AS VICE CHIEF OF THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF. EGIDIO HAD BEEN SERVING AS ASSISTANT TO THE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF. HE WAS NAMED IN THE FALL OF 1975 TO DIRECT THE STILLBORN MILITARY INTERVENTION GROUP (AMI), WHICH HAD BEEN INTENDED TO TAKE OVER COPCON'S SECURITY ROLE. HE HAD SERVED UNDER CDR VICTOR CRESPO, WHEN CRESPO WAS HIGH COMMISSIONER IN MOZAMBIQUE. EGIDIO, 54, IS ONE OF THE FEW SENIOR OFFICERS BROUGHT INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE ARMED FORCES SINCE THE APRIL 1974 COUP. HE IS CONSIDERED CLOSE TO EANES. HE MAY NOT BE AS STRONG AS ARMY VICE CHIEF AS HIS PREDECESSOR, GEN FIGUEIREDO.

2. FIGUEIREDO ON AZORES BASES: INTERVIEWED AUGUST 30 ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE TO TAKE UP HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES AS MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC FOR THE AZORES, GEN GALVAO DE FIGUEIREDO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING: "NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE INITIATED BOTH WITH THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE LAJES BASE AND THE FLORES INSTALLATIONS. IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE PRESENT. THAT IS WHAT IS PROVIDED BY STATUTE, AND THEREFORE THESE

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LISBON 05943 311758Z

REPRESENTATIVES WILL DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF THE AZORES AUTONOMOUS REGION IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS." IN CONVERSATION WITH ARMA SAME DAY, FIGUEIREDO SAID HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT HIS ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE. IF HE PARTICIPATED, HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME OF THE TALKS HELD IN THE UNITED STATES, WHERE HE HAD NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT.

3. SOARES INVITES NETO: ANTONIO MACEDO, LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST DELEGATION TO ANGOLA (REF B) TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE WOULD BE EXTENDING AN OFFICIAL INVITATION FOR AGOSTINHO NETO TO VISIT PORTUGAL AS WELL AS A SOCIALIST PARTY INVITATION FOR THE MPLA TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS. THE PRESIDENCY DENIED THE ORIGINAL PRESS REPORT THAT THE INVITATION WAS FROM PRESIDENT EANES. MACEDO LATER CLARIFIED THAT THE INVITATION WAS ON BEHALF OF PRIME MINISTER SOARES.

4. COMMENT: THE NOMINATIONS OF DOS SANTOS AND EGIDIO REINFORCE FURTHER EANES'S CONTROL OVER THE COMMAND STRUCTURE. TWO REGION COMMANDERS, THE ARMY CHIEF, AND VICE CHIEF HAVE BEEN NAMED SINCE EANES BECAME ARMED FORCES CHIEF. EANES HAS ENSURED THAT TRUSTED PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS WERE NAMED TO THESE KEY POSITIONS.
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